



INDIAN SCULPTURE THROUGH THE AGES

Educational Set of 20 exact-scale casts of
objects in the National Museum.

Listing of casts.

DRAFT LIST OF QUESTIONS AND ESSAY TOPICS

ed for use of teachers.

1954
hibition for use in schools and other
educational centres, organized at the request
of the Ministry of Scientific Research and
Cultural Affairs, New Delhi, by the Nation-
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Introduction and captions by

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INDIAN SCULPTURE THROUGH THE AGES

The Sanskrit term CHITRA, meaning sculpture in the round, is the highest expression of art as conceived by students of art in ancient India.

The beginnings of art in India go back to a very remote age. Harappan art of about 2500 B.C., shows a high stage of development, which suggests a very much longer tradition. The perfect modelling of human and animal figurines at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa and the technical skill of the craftsman, who could cast images in bronze, give us a picture of an art worthy of high centres of civilization, and place the Harappan culture on a par with the most advanced civilizations of the ancient world at a comparable stage of development at the date.

The earliest historical sculpture in the country is of the Mauryan age (4th-3rd century B.C.). It is distinguished by great vigour and the sandstone used was given a high polish. The features of animals on the Asokan capitals, like the lion and the bull, and birds, and geese in a row on the abacus show the sculptor's mastery of form. A few heads, discovered at Sarnath, are in the National Museum. The Yakshi from Didarganj and the lovely torso of Tirthankara from Lohanipur in the Patna Museum, as well as two Yakshas from Patna (Indian Museum, Calcutta) are excellent examples of Mauryan handling of the human figure.

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The lion capital at Sarnath used by the Government of India as its emblem and the bull capital from Rampurwa, now in New Delhi, illustrate the still more characteristic monumental art of Asoka.

During the time of the Sungas (CIRCA 185-100 B.C.) who succeeded the Mauryas in North India, the rail around the stupa at Bharhut (Madhya Pradesh), was erected. This is a masterpiece of Sunga sculpture, now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Fragments of this period have been discovered in other places also, including Sarnath and Kausambi, of which there are examples in the National Museum.

The Kushanas (2nd century A.D.), the next important dynasty in the North, were great patrons of art and we find a distinctive red sandstone school at Mathura with a preference for a native mode of expression and themes from both Buddhist and Hindu sources. This differs from art in the North Western Frontier where foreign influence is predominant during the same period using both Buddhist and Hindu subjects. This Gandhara phase of Kushana art is marked by late Greco—Roman traits and it is almost entirely Buddhist. In the Gandhara area the earlier carvings in stone, like the later stuccos, have a vigour and charm of expression which give them a place as masterpieces in the world of art. Such carvings as the pleasing figure of Buddha from the Guides Mess at Mardan (Peshawar Museum), like the many miniature toilet trays with beautiful minute carving, recovered at Taxila, of which the National Museum, New Delhi has several, show the sense of

form and decoration, characteristic of the school.

The Yakshis from Bhutesar at Mathura and the figures of Buddha from Sravasti and Maholi, like the Lakshmi, standing on a lotus, pressing her breast as the goddess of prosperity and plenty, and corpulent Kubera, with a smile on his face, both in the National Museum's collection, are fine examples of Kushana art.

The contemporary art of the Satavahanas in the Deccan has great charm and grace. The carvings from the Amaravati region constitute a treasure-house of Satavahana sculpture. The ivory carvers of Vidisa, who sculptured one of the Sanchi gateways, represent a class that the Satavahanas encouraged for their skill and their carving is contemporary with the earlier phase of art at Amaravati and the art in the caves of Western India. The Ikshvakus, successors of the Satavahanas in the Krishna valley, continued these traditions. The stupa embellishment in stone at Nagarjunakonda, of which some pieces are in the National Museum, is very much like that at Amaravati and is contemporary with Gandhara and Kushana art. The examples of architectural sculpture are notable for an all over design, somewhat flat, emphasizing the wall that they enrich. The subjects are Buddhist.

The Kushanas were succeeded by the Gupta monarchs who were powerful for about two centuries in North India (320—495 A.D.). Art flourished vigorously during their time and such great works as the Sarnath Preaching Buddha, the Standing Mathura Buddha and other masterpieces were produced during

their period. The famous Deogarh temple with the three wonderful panels, representing Seshasayi Vishnu, Naranarayana and Karivarada or Gajendravarada is one of the most important Gupta monuments.

The Gurjara-Pratiharas, that came to power in the early medieval period (8th-9th century A.D.), continued the Gupta traditions with wonderful grace in their sculptures which well reveal the advancement in style, and yet remind one of lingering Gupta characteristics.

The Gahadavalas (12th century) continued this art.

The Chandellas constructed lovely temples in Central India, as at Khajuraho, with carvings in high relief of dancers, musicians and other figures.

The Paramaras of Malwa have similar beautiful sculptures one of the best of which is the magnificent Sarasvati, now preserved in the British Museum.

The Palas of Eastern India (9th—11th century), who were Buddhists by faith, greatly encouraged centres of learning like Nalanda, where the stupas and monasteries gave ample scope for the sculptor's expression of an art which sought stimulus in religion. Some of the miniature figures were carved as votive offerings at Nalanda, and generally represent deities of the Buddhist pantheon or scenes from Buddha's life. Pala sculpture in Bihar is somewhat heavier in the general proportions of limbs than in Bengal. The earlier Pala tradition, continued by the Senas in Bengal (12th century), had greater refinement.

The Vakatakas, contemporaries of the Guptas of the north and related to them by matrimony, were responsible for such great monuments as those at Ajanta and the early caves at Ellora (5th-6th century A.D). These traditions were continued by their political successors, the Western Chalukyas (6th-7th century), whose early rulers left great monuments at Aihole and Pattadakal in Mysore. The Rashtrakutas (8th-9th century), who succeeded the early Western Chalukyas, were again after a time replaced by the later Western Chalukyas (11th-12th century), whose work represents an embellished art of the late Medieval period as seen in the temples at Kukkanur, Kuruvatti and other places.

The Eastern Gangas and the Eastern Chalukyas (7th to 10th century) have monuments to represent the Medieval phase of art in the area of Eastern India, south of Bengal. The famous temple at Konarak of the time of Narasimha (13th century) is a culmination of the art of earlier centuries at Bhubaneswar and other places.

The Kakatiyas (12th-13th century), who were originally feudatories of the Chalukyas, have left ornate temples as at Warangal, Hanamkonda, Tripurantakam and other sites, with remarkable slender figure carving in the late Chalukya style, though less ornate. Of this the richly embellished gateway at Warangal of which a lintel is in the National Museum is an excellent example.

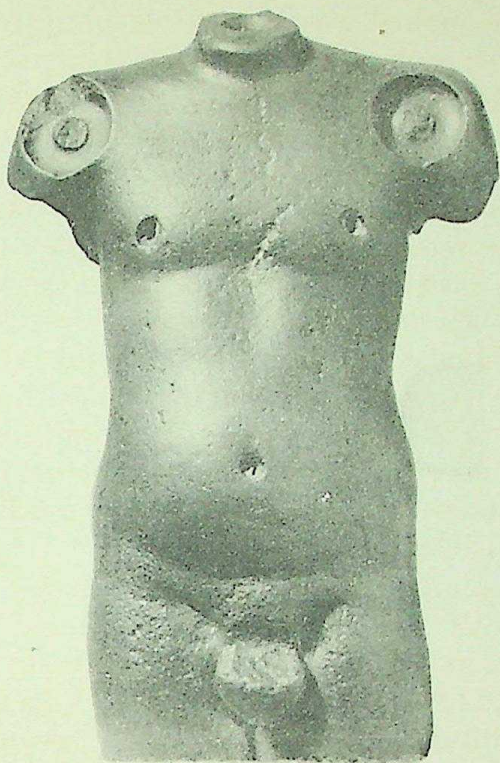
Contemporaries of the early Western Chalukyas were the Pallavas in the Tamil country and Mahendravarman Pallava, one of the most famous art-minded kings in

Indian history, was responsible for introducing cave architecture in the south and embellished these caves with sculptural decorations. Within a century from the time of Mahendravarman arose structural temples with pleasing carvings, examples of which may be seen in Kanchipuram and elsewhere. Pallava influences are noticed as far south as the Pandya and Chera areas.

Pallava traditions were continued by the Cholas (10th-13th century), who were great builders of temples and they literally studied their empire with temples, embellished with sculptures, as at Tanjavur and Gangai-kondacholapuram.

The Vijayanagar emperors (14th-16th century) were also great patrons of art and literature and in their vast empire different patterns of temples may be noticed with a maze of sculptural embellishment. The last phase of art in the south was during the time of the Nayaks (16th-17th century).

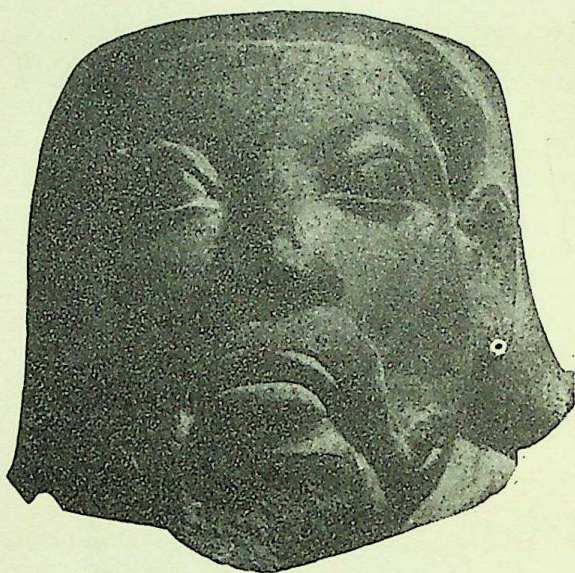
This Set contains twenty examples typical of fine work of some of these phases of art, from many parts of the country through several centuries, all exact-size casts of small sculptures or details of larger pieces in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi.



1. MALE TORSO, 9.2x5.8x 3 cm

This is a splendid example of stone carving in miniature at Harappa nearly five thousand years ago. It is however surprising that the sculptor at Harappa could produce a figure as perfect as a Greek one of the fifth century B.C. at that remote age.

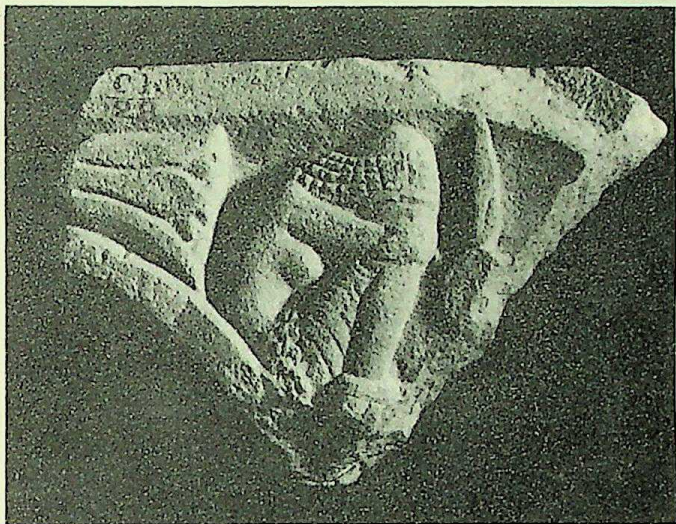
Harappa, circa 2500 B.C.



2. MALE HEAD, 14.5x16.5x16.5 cm

This example is typical of the sculptor's work in the Mauryan period in the 3rd century B.C. Mauryan work is characterised by great strength, fine modelling and a high polish of the sandstone used.

Maurya, 3rd century B.C., Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.



3. WOMAN IN GRIEF, 23x15.5x5 cm

This is a fragment of a panel depicting the female form as conceived by the Sunga sculptor. It resembles early sculptures from Bharhut. The anatomy of the figure and the ornaments including the MEKHALA or the girdle-string are typical of Sunga art.

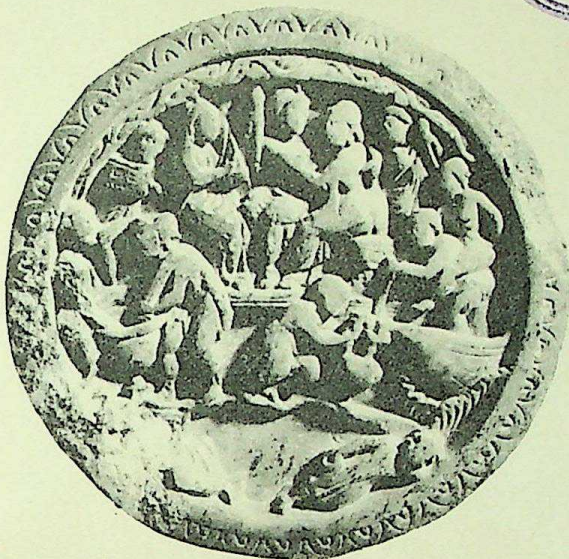
Sunga, 2nd century B.C., Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.



4. BODHISATTVA HEAD, 27.5x20x15 cm

This is a typical Gandhara work of fine quality. The Bodhisattva is represented with moustaches, wearing a rich turban on his head. The Greek type of face is obvious. Indian motifs have been combined in Gandhara with a Greek idea of form. This mixture of foreign and indigenous elements in Gandhara art distinguishes it from other schools of art.

Gandhara, 2nd century A.D., Taxila.



5. MEDALLION WITH FEASTING SCENE,
16.8x16.8x1.6 cm

This is an example of the many toilet trays found at Taxila, an important centre of Gandhara art, and elsewhere with delicate miniature carving of feasts and other themes. This medallion shows both the preparation and the drinking of wine.

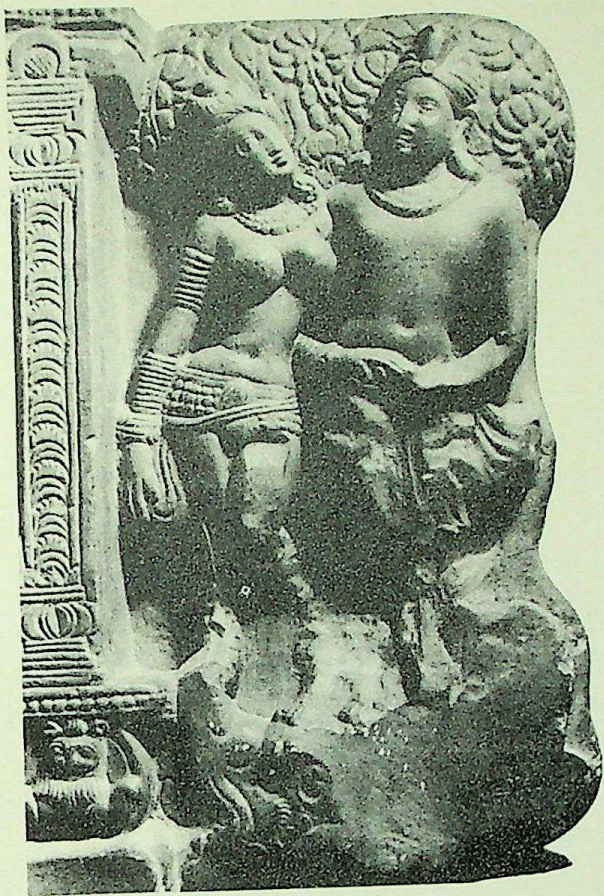
Gandhara, 2nd century A.D., Taxila.



6. SIDDHARTHA AMIDST PLEASURES,
35.6x36.5x4.5 cm

This is a panel from a STUPA carved in the style of the Amaravati school. It is a typical example of the work of the period in the Krishna Valley in lime-stone. It shows Prince Siddhartha in a harem, surrounded only by things lovely so that he could never have an idea of the ills of life. The sculptor has tried to present the Prince as almost immersed in a stream of pleasures.

Ikshvaku, 2nd-3rd century A.D., Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh.



7. DAMPATI, 35.5x18.8x7 cm

This is a fine example of the motif of a loving pair, so often occurring in Indian sculpture from the earliest periods of art. Sometimes they are together under a tree in loving embrace; sometimes the woman is in coquettish mood; sometimes one offers a cup of wine to the other; sometimes both are celestials flying in the sky, and so forth. This is also an example of early Krishna valley carving.

Ikshvaku, 2nd-3rd century A.D., Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh.



8. BODHISATTVA MAITREYA, 67x24.5x12 cm

A mature Kushana work, it shows the future Buddha with a flask of ambrosia in his hand, as is usual in early sculpture. The halo, with scalloped border around his head, is characteristic of the Kushana period. The inscription below gives his name.

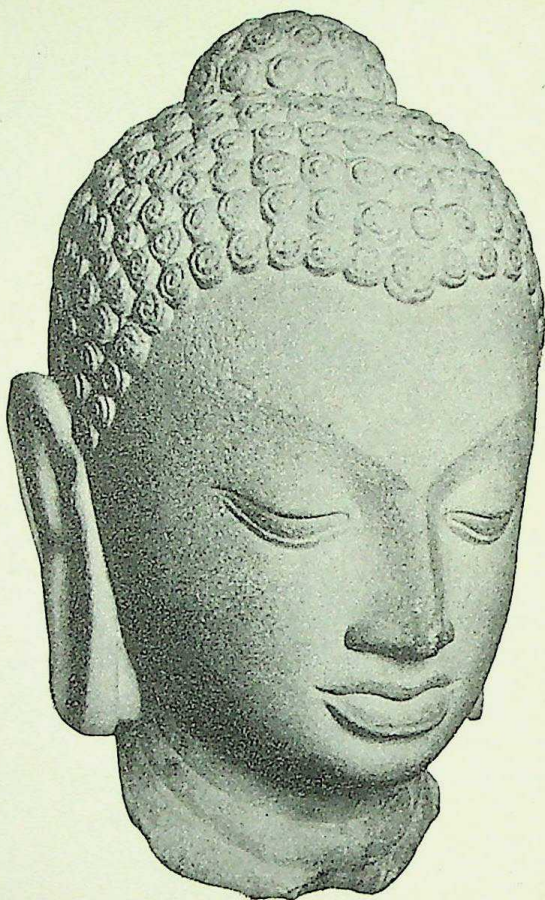
Kushana, 2nd century A.D., from Ahichchhatra, Uttar Pradesh.



9. MOTHER AND CHILD, 59x18.5x7 cm

This is a very pleasing motif of eternal interest: the mother fondling the child. She is here offering a rattle to the baby at her feet. The costume, ornamentation and bodily contours are typical of the best period of Kushana art.

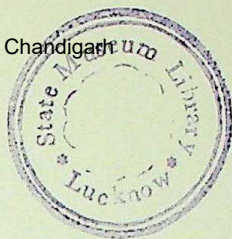
Kushana, 2nd century A.D., Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.



10. BUDDHA HEAD, 26x15.8x15 cm

This is a typical example of the calm and serene face of Buddha as represented in the best period of Gupta art in about the 5th century A.D. It is almost as charming as the face of the famous Sarnath Buddha. The eyes are half-closed in a contemplative mood; the ringlets of hair on the USHNISHA are well fashioned.

Gupta, 5th century A.D., Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.



11. SESHASAYI VISHNU, 8.7x16x3.2 cm

The famous panel of Seshasayi Vishnu at Deogarh has inspired several beautiful carvings of the type in the different schools of the Medieval period. This is a small miniature, representing Vishnu reclining on the serpent couch. It is a typical example of the Pratihara school continuing the flavour of Gupta art in the Medieval period.

Pratihara, 9th-10th century A.D., locality not known, probably Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.



12. TARA, 27x22.5x10 cm

This broken bust of Tara is a splendid example of Medieval work of the Banaras school continuing the tradition of the Guptas.

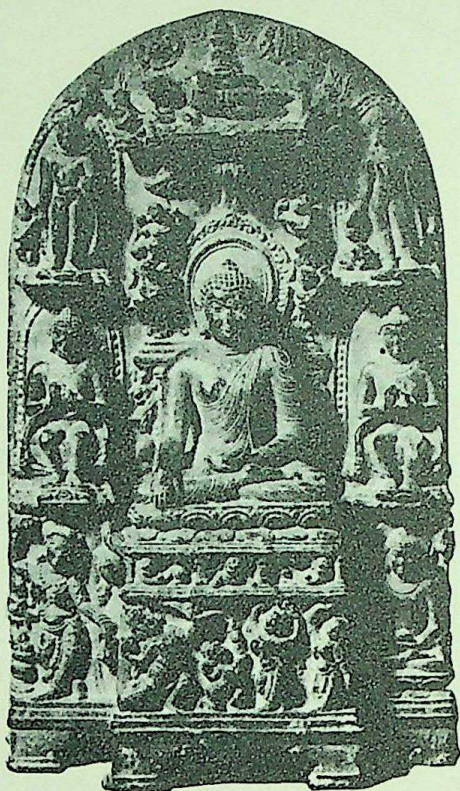
Pratihara, 9th-10th century A.D., Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.



13. FEMALE HEAD, 22x24x14.8 cm

This is a fine example showing the flower and pearl-decked coiffure which is a charming theme in Indian art. There is a special charm in Medieval art from Rajasthan where the early Gupta traditions still linger to add grace to the sculptures.

Gahadavala, 11th-12th century A.D., Rajor-garh, Alwar, Rajasthan.



14. SCENES FROM BUDDHA'S LIFE,
14 x 8.4 x 4.3 cm

There are seven scenes: the birth, the enlightenment after overcoming Mara, the exposition of the law, the descent from heaven, the subjugation of Nalagiri, the miracle of Sravasti, the presentation of honey and the passing away.

This is a fine example of miniature carving of Pala period from Nalanda, a great centre not only of learning but also of art.

Pala, 9th-10th century A.D., Nalanda, Bihar.



15. SIMHANADA. 9.2 x 5.6 x 2.4 cm

Lokesvara is conceived almost like Siva with matted locks, with the TRISULA beside him, seated at ease on a lion in the MAHARAJALILA pose. In the Medieval period Buddhist sculptures present a maze of iconographic forms, and this is one.

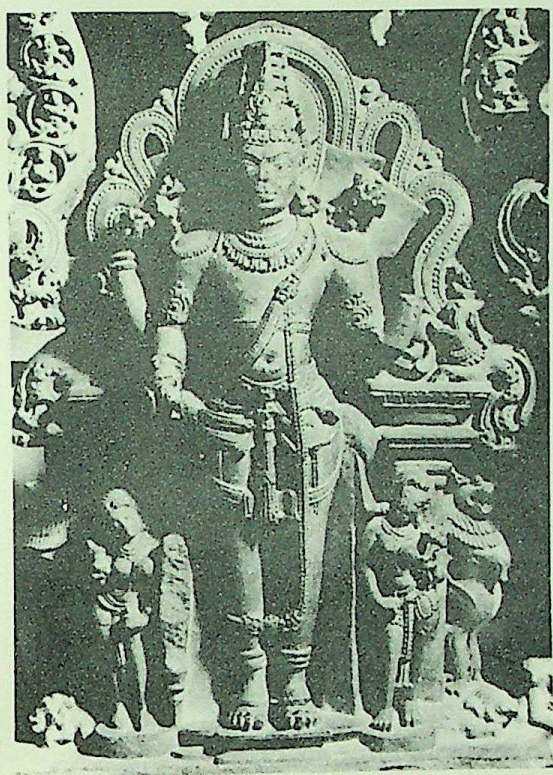
Pala, 9th-10th century A.D., Nalanda, Bihar.



16. SUVARCHASA, 37x20.5x7 cm

Chhaya and Suvarchasa are the consorts of Surya. In the large sculpture of Surya, from which this Suvarchasa is taken, they are presented as attending on the god, almost like the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, by the proximity of the PURNA-KUMBHAS or overflowing vessels. The carving has the charm typical of medieval Eastern Ganga sculpture.

Eastern Ganga, 13th century A.D., Konarak, Orissa.



17. VISHNU, 48x18x10 cm

This is a portion of carving from a lintel, typical of the decorative work of the late Western Chalukya school. In this it may be observed that even the weapons of the deities develop long ornamental tassels.

Western Chalukya, 12th century A.D., Hampi, Mysore.



18. DANCING VISHNU, 39x22.5x10 cm

This is an unusual pose for Vishnu and is from a large lintel. Being a small piece it lacks polish which is usual in Kakatiya sculpture. The traditions of this school are derived from Western Chalukya, which is noted for decorative exuberance.

Kakatiya, 12th century A.D., Warangal, Andhra Pradesh.



19. KANKALAMURTI, 73x38.5x8.5 cm

This panel is typical of the Rajasimha period of Pallava art towards the end of the 7th century A.D. and shows Siva as a beggar carrying a KANKALA or skeleton, adored by the wives of sages. Though somewhat worn it has all the grace of Pallava work of this period.

Pallava, 7th century A.D., locality not known, probably Kanchipuram.



20. GANA CONCH-BLOWER, 52x34.4x21 cm

This is a typical figure of the early Chola period representing the quaint form of a Gana, dwarfish follower of Siva, blowing the conch. Such funny figures are carved in profusion in Pallava and Chola monuments for creating an atmosphere of mirth and merriment.

Chola, 10th-11th century A.D., locality unknown, probably Tanjavur District.

(A) SOME SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

1. Which two of the heads in the exhibition interest you most and why? Compare them.
2. What is your favourite piece in the exhibition? Why?
3. Are you surprised that the male torso from Harappa is so old? Why?
4. What makes the Gandhara Bodhisattva different from the other pieces?
5. Do you like the mother and child? Explain.
6. Comment on the scenes from Buddha's life. Do they tell the story clearly and well?
7. What is the place given to sculpture in Indian art?
8. How old are the earliest art objects in India?
9. What is the earliest historical sculpture? What are the distinguishing features of Mauryan sculpture? Mention a few examples.
10. To what period does the Bharhut rail belong?
11. Distinguish Mathura art from Gandhara art.
12. Which is the best Buddha image of the Gandhara school?
13. Mention a few masterpieces of Kushana art?
14. Who carved the Sanchi gateways and who patronized them?
15. Whom did the Ikshvakus succeed and where did they build stupas embellished with carvings?

16. What are the Gupta masterpieces representing Buddha? Mention the famous panels from the Deogarh temple.
17. What are the art traditions followed by the Gurjara-Pratiharas ?
18. Where do we find the temples of the Chandellas?
19. Mention a famous Paramara sculpture now in the British Museum.
20. How did art flourish so well at Nalanda? What differences are there in Pala sculpture from Bihar and Bengal ?
21. Where are the famous Vakataka monuments? Where have the early Western Chalukyas left their monuments?
22. To whose time does the temple at Konarak belong and what is its place among Orissan temples ?
23. What is the style followed by the Kakatiyas and how is it distinguished from the Chalukya?
24. Mention the most famous art-minded king in India. What is his contribution to South Indian art?
25. What is the artistic activity of the Cholas?
26. What are the Greek and Indian elements in Gandhara art?
27. How did the Vijayanagar emperors patronize art?
28. How is Bodhisattva Maitreya distinguished in early sculpture?
29. What is the most famous Seshasayi image?
30. What are the characteristics of Simhanada?

(B) Short essays on the following topics may be requested.

1. Harappan art.
2. Compare and contrast Kushana and Gandhara art.
3. Pala art, its characteristics, area and influences.
4. Chalukya art, its origin, development and ramifications.
5. Pallava art.
6. What is the school of art that pleases you most and what are your reasons for liking it?



National Museum, New Delhi

Price.